

**THE INDENTED**  
**IV**

**The Quill**

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SCENE 1:

Ivy is sat at a bench outside the Rack and Wrangle pub. Ralph approaches at a steady rate and Ivy leaves the bench to meet him.

- Ivy: Hold up there ducky; let me help you along.
- Ralph: I'm good, I'm good! I've got this... hello!
- Ivy: Hiya. Sorry I couldn't pick you up, got away really late from the yard.
- Ralph: That's no problem, how did the show go today?
- Ivy: Yeah... don't be in the first half dozen to perform dressage in front of some judges. Otherwise it was a good day. You want a hand over the bench?
- Ralph: The bench is mastered, especially as you've put a beer there for me already.
- Ivy: Pale ale, to go with your skin tone...
- Ralph: But only a lemonade for you?
- Ivy: Well... there's a little gin in there too. Ask me how it went with my counter canter during the dressage routine....
- Ralph: How did it go with the counter canter during the dressage routine?
- Ivy: Really badly... probably that's more the reason I came away without a rosette than stringent early judging. Porter can get excited when he has to perform. He was skittish, and probably me too. You don't get to win them all Ralph, and the weather held good so that was a surprise. I hope it does this Sunday as well, you coming with your Mum?
- Ralph: Yeah maybe... I might be meeting up with Duncan, possibly.

Ivy: Who's Duncan?

Ralph: A pen pal that I've started meeting up with. He's really into HAM radio; I'm trying to learn about it. It probably won't happen because he doesn't like to come and pick me up, and Sunday is crap for catching a bus.

Ivy: Yes, come and see me Morris dance with your Mum instead. You can sit on the wall and I'll use your stick for my first turn.

Ralph: Can I be the Rag Bag?

Ivy: You always are! Tell me what HAM radio is like?

Ralph: With Duncan? It's different. I haven't actually managed any communication yet, but it's only been one try.

Ivy: You mean with the radio?

Ralph: Yeah that too...

Ivy: And what is our new friend Duncan like?

Ralph: Ooh, I couldn't possibly do him justice. He certainly has his own... filters.

Ivy: They always do with you.

Ralph: It's why I always like to see you, while we still can...

Ivy: Ralph, come on... we were having a nice conversation.

Ralph: About Duncan?

Ivy: About all of them, all your chronicles. I bet you mean a lot to them, I know you do to Charlie.

Ralph: I can't leave them, Ivy, especially Charlie. He needs me around to use a boom or something. And it's not just him, if

I don't witness Eugene's existence who would? Roger has a gun next to his typewriter, that's going to get out of hand if I stop being the only person who drops round to see him.

Ivy: Are you in too deep?

Ralph: Maybe... I didn't plan for it like that, I just started paying attention to them, and that turns out to mean a lot, even to people who don't seem like they want to talk with anybody.

Ivy: Is Roger the one who keeps lots of red wine around that gun? The one that you leave with half finished bottles of port?

Ralph: Yeah but he teaches me writing technique, of a fashion. I'm probably not even a good influence, I just like seeing the way he enjoys a glass of port. That's terrible, isn't it; I just encourage others for my own writing. And then I do nothing with it, as good as hide everything away. What is the point of all of that?

Ivy: Ralph... I love you.

Ralph: What?

Ivy: I love you, Ralph. Your mum knows it as well.

Ralph: Please leave my mum out of this one. I guess that means half of Avalon's Brigand know as well?

Ivy: Morris dancers are pretty tight knit.

Ralph: And my Mum is pretty loose lipped... aargh, why are we talking about my Mum?

Ivy: Because I love you and she knows it, and she is a devil for the detail. Ralph, come to Hereford with me when I go. We'll have our own house on the stable grounds; it's even a bungalow...

Ralph: I suppose mum wants me to do it? You must know that already.

Ivy: I have applied through all the appropriate channels, yes.

Ralph: And so I'm off to Hereford, to burden you while you train horses for dressage, for however long your broken spine holds out to keep doing that...

Ivy: Ralph, make me a better offer... In the time it takes for you to pay for me to get another round, make me a better offer. Think about it.

Ralph: OK, but when you come back outside we're not going to talk about my mum anymore.

Ivy: That sounds like a great idea. Another pale, sir?

SCENE 2:  
Ralph and Ivy have taken their drinks to sit along the bank of a river. Ralph fiddles with his walking stick.

Ivy: What do you think...?

Ralph: I don't trust water, especially brown water...

Ivy: Is that it...? Ralph I didn't get a rosette today because I've spent the whole day thinking about saying this to you.

Ralph: Am I putting your career at risk?

Ivy: No, just maybe everything else that I care about.

Ralph: Well I told you I'm a burden. But I love you too.

Ivy: Yeah I know, Ralph...

Ralph: Mum tell you?

Ivy: Of course.

Ralph: Then it's all settled, isn't it...

Ivy: You could kiss me.

Ralph: But you've put my mum in my head.

Ivy: Then let me put someone else in it. A friend of mine from School, Rachael Loom, she runs a theatre in Hereford. She came to visit last week and I told her about your chronicling. She wants to meet you, understand the people *you* do... Ralph you've got all you'd ever need to write, all those angles that people have let you into...

Ralph: But they'd be watercolours then... of real people. I don't know how I feel about that.

Ivy: So you do think you could write some kind of a play for her, then? Ralph you have a bent towards seeing the inside track on people. And you love them; you'd do right by them. I feel like I'm being pushy, tell me about the better plan that you'd said you'd give me.

Ralph: I can't think of one, I didn't know I'd have to pack one into my bag. Don't take me wrong, it is an amazing offer...

Ivy: But?

Ralph: But nothing, I'm just still a little stunned. I never told a girl that I loved them before...

Ivy: Tell me again.

Ralph: I love you, V. I have from ages back, from when you first joined the Morris group.

Ivy: Yeah, you spoke to me before anyone else did.

Ralph: I probably wanted to get in with my own introduction before mum did it for me.

Ivy: Of course... and you had your note book out; you were writing something up on the wall outside the pub.

Ralph: Probably drawing a gang of question marks as to who you were.

Ivy: I think all the Morris dancers were doing that...

Ralph: Well you were wearing a Border Morris outfit and that's always going to raise eyebrows in Norfolk...

Ivy: I thought it was a good outfit.

Ralph: It was... I nearly dropped my stick. It's not easy for me to be first in the queue; I had to attempt a dash towards you...

Ivy: Yes you did. Ralph, you always have looked good with your walking stick...

Ralph: Ah, please don't, do you know how frustrating that sounds? The leg did used to work. I did used to dash.

Ivy: And yet you're still friends with Charlie, for all his input in ruining that.

Ralph: He's my best friend. Even when he fucked off for ages...

Ivy: Is Duncan going to be your new best friend!?

Ralph: Duncan doesn't want a best friend... some people just appreciate a witness. What's your friend like in Hereford?

Ivy: She's great; she's just interested in telling stories and meeting the people who have them.

Ralph: She can't have anything I've got to do with Roger. He's found himself lumbering into his own thriller with the biography he's writing.

Ivy: Is that why he's keeping the gun around? Can I meet him?

Ralph: He's pretty shy.

Ivy: But he must have some chit chat in him if he interviews people for a living.

Ralph: Oh he's talky, penetrative; no doubt about it. But he likes to view things from further back.

Ivy: You know I'm not trying to push you to the front, Ralph. I don't even feel great that I'm putting this all to you. I don't... I don't know... Ralph, say one of your things to make me feel better.

Ralph: I used to pay a girl for sex... Everything works down there, V; it's just the leg that's limp.

Ivy: Right... that has helped, actually. Who did you used to pay?

Ralph: Ellie Fitts. I used to hang out with her socially for some time and then one night she just offered it.

Ivy: But for money.

Ralph: Yeah, thirty quid. It didn't seem extortionate, and I think she knew that I was clean...

Ivy: And!?

Ralph: Well you know, don't you? The mechanics of it all? I hope you understand, V, no-one else was offering. Not even for greater sums of money.

Ivy: Tell me more about the mechanics of handing over money afterwards.

Ralph: I always did it before-hand after my second go. It always seemed a lot of money after it was all done.



Ivy: How did you feel afterwards?

Ralph: Tired, wobbly... I don't know; it all got too expensive in the end so I had to stop going to see her.

Ivy: Crikey; when did all this draw a close?

Ralph: Two years ago, a little more

Ivy: Do you miss her?

Ralph: Not really, but the mechanics of it were lovely.

Ivy: That's sure good to know. Where do you... y'know, put yourself?

Ralph: I have to lay down, V. I can't do the upright bit. Is that going to be OK for your back?

Ivy: How soon can you pack your house up, Ralph?

SCENE 3:

Ralph is drunk and lies against the bank with Ivy, a glass of whiskey in his hand.

Ralph: Would I get my own room in the bungalow?

Ivy: Of course, your study... you can take your pick of the rooms.

Ralph: I don't come with much stuff, V. I can pretty much pack it down to what I have here with me.

Ivy: I wish I had that discipline, Ralph.

Ralph: It's not what you think; I just struggle to carry heavy ornaments home on the bus. Roger is lucky that I can manage the port in my bag.

Ivy: You can carry a lot more than you imagine, Ralph. I'm wretched to think of taking you from the people you help to carry along. I want to reach to you but I know that my hand would take you away, and I don't know that I can do that.

Ralph: I don't want to think about them, even if that's just my chemicals telling me so. Say something to help me, V...

Ivy: Let me chronicle you, Ralph...

Ralph: Ah, don't say things like that, though.

Ivy: I could witness the witness.

Ralph: There's not much to witness most days.

Ivy: Then you'll just be like everyone else I'm afraid. Can I ask you one more thing?

Ralph: Before you reach out to me? What if I don't answer it correctly?

Ivy: You already have my love but I'd still like to know...

Ralph: Yes?

Ivy: Why did you never chronicle Avalon's Brigand?

Ralph: You noticed... it seemed the more curious choice not to. All the dress-up and whacking sticks, all that politicking... Morris chronicles itself.

Ivy: I fucking love you, Ralph Arcfield. I'm glad you have that stick because you might not have those eyes otherwise.

Ralph: Are you going to ask if I'd chronicle your dressage career?

Ivy: I can't, there was just one question left for me to ask. Shame...

Ralph: Then may I?

Ivy:           Ralph you may ask anything...

Ralph:        OK... can we make a try of making love in the back of your Polo, now that it's gone dark?

Ivy:           You dirty dog, Ralph. Come on then, let's take the glasses back to the bar first...

Ralph:        What if I get you a double rum when we get to the bar and we can stay the night in your car?

Ivy:           You absolutely do need chronicling, Ralph...

Ralph:        Wait till you see The Quill...

THE END